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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, APRIL 27, 2007

#### In Today's Papers

##### Turkish Parliament to Hold First Round of Presidential Elections Friday

All papers report the Turkish Parliament will hold the first round of voting for President of the Republic on Friday amid ongoing fierce debates regarding the election. The main opposition CHP plans to boycott the vote, saying it will ask the Constitutional Court to declare it invalid if less than two thirds of all lawmakers (367) are in the chamber. Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc maintains the presence of 184 MPs in the chamber will be sufficient to go ahead with the voting today. If the court rules in the opposition's favor, the government must call a snap general election -- something opposition parties Anavatan and DYP are demanding. Mainstream Vatan sees some possibility that the court will rule in favor of the opposition because seven of the court's 11 members are staunch secularists who were appointed by outgoing President Sezer. In any case, Gul is not expected to win in the first or second rounds of voting as he needs 367 votes; his victory in the third round, set for May 9, when he needs only 276 votes, is virtually assured, however. All papers point to opposition party Anavatan's key position holding 20 seats in the parliament. Papers report Anavatan will announce its decision on joining the voting after a meeting with DYP today. Mainstream Sabah says AKP has been working to convince CHP MPs from southeast Turkey to show up in parliament today. Islamist-oriented dailies Zaman and Yeni Safak say the voting process will be "a test for Turkish democracy." Liberal Radikal warns a cancellation by the Constitutional Court will bring a period of instability in Turkey. Turkey's constitution stipulates that if it fails to elect a president by May 16, the parliament will be dissolved, and early general elections will be called.

##### Editorial Commentary on Turkish Presidential Elections

Taha Akyol, writing in the mainstream Milliyet, advises calm: "If the issue is taken to the Constitutional Court, there will be another challenging period because the ruling will lead to important political consequences. If the court rules in favor of the

opposition's challenge, the Constitution clearly calls for an immediate election, most likely in either July or September. In any case, there is no need for worrying, panicking or tension-building. After all, the people will have their say in the end."

Similarly Mustafa Unal, commenting in the intellectual Islamist-oriented Zaman, concludes, "The presidential election issue is not only a concern for candidate Gul or the AKP, but it is very much Turkey's concern. Today's voting session is extremely critical. All political parties are going to go through a democracy test. Regardless of the outcome, even if it ends up in the court, the people will have the final say because all paths lead to the ballot box."

Okay Gonensin points out in the mainstream Vatan that "circumstances indicate that the election of Turkey's new president will go through a legal debate and be controversial with the real questions being who will benefit from this atmosphere and how will that be reflected at the polls."

#### Solana-Larijani Wrap Up Talks in Ankara

All papers report EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana and Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani wrapped up talks on day two of their gathering in Ankara yesterday. Solana and Larijani have agreed in Ankara on a formula, says Milliyet, according to which Iran will limit its uranium enrichment activities in exchange for the permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany agreeing not to adopt new sanctions against Tehran.

The Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak says that Turkey has emerged as "a capital of peace" in its region with its moves as facilitator, as seen in the efforts of Ankara to bring together Iran's Larijani and

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EU's Solana as well as the upcoming meeting between the Afghan and Pakistan presidents Karzai and Musharraf to discuss border security and terrorism matters.

#### Zebari Meets Gul on Iraq Talks in Egypt

Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Yeni Safak and others report Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari met Thursday with Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul in Ankara, where Zebari came to rally support for a summit meeting of Iraq's neighbors in Egypt on May 3-4. Cumhuriyet claims Zebari told Gul the participation of Iran and Syria depends on Turkey's powers of persuasion. Gul said he wouldn't be able to make it to the meeting in Egypt because of the presidential elections in Turkey, but pledged to send high-level officials from the Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) "if Iraq steps up the struggle against the PKK." Cumhuriyet expects MFA Undersecretary Ertugrul Apakan to represent Turkey in Egypt.

#### Turkish Islamist Charities Not Controlled

Liberal Radikal and the leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet continue reporting on the German police raid on Islamist leaning Kanal-7 International TV and Islamist charity organization Deniz Feneri in Frankfurt earlier this week. Deniz Feneri, in an act seen as money laundering, allegedly gave half of the 14 billion Euros it has collected in donations to Kanal-7 TV as well as to some Palestinian organizations. Although the Istanbul-based charity Deniz Feneri denied any ties with the one in Germany, Cumhuriyet says they share the same building with Kanal-7 TV in Frankfurt, and the same names are seen as both institutions' board members. The paper adds Deniz Feneri Germany has occasionally transferred money to Deniz Feneri Istanbul, of which another controversial Islamist group of companies, Yimpas, is a sponsor.

Radikal notes that Islamist charity organizations such as "Deniz Feneri Dernegi," "Kimse Yok Mu Dernegi," "Istanbul Uluslararası Yardımlasma Dernegi," "Can Suyu Yardımlasma Dernegi" and "IHH Vakfi" were given the status of "organizations working for public good," allowing them to collect donations as well as exempting them from taxes. The Interior Ministry has been ineffective in controlling such organizations totaling 500 in Turkey, says Radikal.

TV Highlights

NTV (6 a.m.)

#### Domestic News

- An eight-storey building collapsed in the Sirinevler neighborhood of Istanbul on Thursday. One man was rescued from the rubble. Most people had left the building before the collapse when they heard cracking sounds.
- Four more suspects have been taken into custody in connection with the foiled assassination attempt against Higher Education Board president Erdogan Tezic earlier this week.
- Inal Batu, CHP deputy for Hatay, is expected to resign from CHP and join DYP on Monday.
- Outgoing President Sezer said the president should be elected for a single five-year term and that presidential powers must be narrowed.
- Landmines believed to have been planted by the PKK killed two Turkish soldiers in Sirnak and Bitlis yesterday.

#### International News

- The US House of Representatives has defied a pledged veto by President Bush and passed a bill for troop including a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq.

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- The Iraqi parliament is to discuss a new oil law which will allow Iraq to sign oil exploration and production contracts with foreign companies.
- 10 Iraqi soldiers were killed in a suicide car bomb attack on a military checkpoint in northern Iraq.
- A top Taliban commander said Osama bin Laden was behind the February attack outside a US military base in Afghanistan during a visit by Vice President Dick Cheney.

WILSON